

***Vegas Rob Halford 1984 (Judas Priest)
and the Shattered 4th Wall***

Summer 1984. Vegas.

The band Judas Priest at UNLV's Thomas & Mack stadium thing.

19,000-ish people. Wow.

Anyone reading this has to understand that July '84 was a massive time for Judas Priest.

Clearly the biggest Priest ever became, a cultural British giant force spread across the world.

And the styles of musically iconic leather and metal created by Priest were mostly originals, often part-borrowed by Rob Halford from London gay leather SM subculture of varied ages.

Rob Halford—of course the Priest lead singer, aka “Metal God”—was a colossal global star. Worth mentioning that Rob being gay in 1984 was kept almost 100% from the public, kinda the “worst secret” of pro music, and Rob's homosexuality was even called “hiding in plain sight” from the late 70s til he officially came out completely, 1998.

And lemme tell ya, I loved Rob deeply from my discovery of his work in 1982, forward. Still do. His passion and phenomenal energy opened mental/emotion doors that things rarely did before. His confidence and expressions were borderline humor with serious drama, and intelligence mixed chemical. Damn was he a teacher of sorts. Tough and stoic; sparked fire.

And naughty, too.

The rest of the Judas Priest band was hugely celebrated by the public...and I celebrated, too.

From cool-lookin' pub dude Glenn Tipton on his black 60s Stratocaster (Fender), highly modified; and long straight fashion blonde K.K. Downing, for whom Hamer produced a custom Mini V with a far out Kahler tremolo system; and swinging Ian Hill, who often used a Fender 70s jazz bass with his very long grizzly hair and plucking.

And of course Dave Holland, always on positioned Tama drums, who rattled-on during the historically most successful Priest tunes, ever.

I was first strongly intro-ed to Priest in a late autumn 1982 midnight Northtown Vegas trailer park. My tall thin major-athletic Black BFF Parker had gingerly drug me down dark weeknight hood streets before Zero Hour— into a kinda large residential trailer thing off the Belmont & Carey intersection at the time.

Guy who lived in a back-end cartography trailer unit, white dude I can't remember, had somehow acquired a titanic Nakamichi stereo system in his spot, with speakers at least 4' tall (1.2m). So hearing tracks of a Priest album I had no idea about, called "*Screaming for Vengeance*"— yeah, profound. And it flashed-by on a Maxell MX specialized tape, no less.

Sitting clad with leather in that dark super-poverty neighborhood, speakers blasting "*Bloodstone*" and "*You Got Another Thing Comin*"—while we all strangely drank Kirin Ichiban Japanese beer somehow, from the owner—it was mystical. Moving. Powerful as fuque. Surreal and fantastic tunes, visions of other worlds and travels. Lots of differences.

I was stunned in a way you could certainly call "immense".

From there, Rob Halford fast became a major inspiration and influence for me. His lyrics were spectacular, either written or sung, and the rhythmic/tonal music of Priest was far above all else...and largely *new new new* all the time.

Of course that all went away about 1985, but let's not get into that now.

Oh: Have to mention of course that Parker (real character; fake name) appears in other creative non-fiction works of mine, including “The Har-Magedon Thai Stick” and “Cleopatra, Salvador Dalí, and the Las Vegas Acid Tab”. Look for him sometime.

And before the major upcoming occurrence of summer 1984, important to enjoy further revelations of Judas Priest significance on 29 May 1983— a thing called US Fest.

US Festival happened via Steve Wozniak, original Apple multi-millionaire guru and visionary (Steve Jobs’ partner) who financially assembled so many of the world’s best bands of many genres. To put it quickly, Judas Priest appeared as the #1 star of US Fest’s “Heavy Metal Sunday,” which brought nearly 500,000 fans to Glen Helen Park facility of California (basically between LA and Victorville).

At the time, certain people brought to US Fest possibly the most sophisticated and über-clean acid (LSD) ever created, known as “Dancing Bear” or “Dead Bear” from Grateful Dead logos...and originated from Owley Stanley, Grateful Dead’s sound engineer/financier, most famous LSD chemist guy ever. Stanley tossed together about 5-million hits of “ultra-pure” acid in his days.

Indeed, his goods were often called “Clear Crystal” or similar, judged as far beyond other LSD stuff. Yes, I wound-up with a tab from that legendary 1983 event, but I was never there. It was brought to Vegas...and that’s another story.

Now to 24 July 1984: Judas Priest’s “*Defenders of the Faith*” tour in Las Vegas at Thomas and Mack Center. A kind of UNLV interior stadium place, built not too long before said July.

Interesting time. The world was all kinds of Cold War and emerging computers, with almost zero phones or carried cameras— so you generally needed a coin or two for calls anywhere outside a house landline. If you *had* one.

Try and understand what that was truly like: *privacy*, far beyond anything you can possibly know in 2026. In 1984, zero Amazon “Blink” cameras, zero remote recordings of any sort, zero GPS, and zero *anything* technical, really.

Just feet and clothes and deliciously real *privacy*. Nobody could get ahold of you unless arranged somehow at a pay phone or similar...or via some kind of sheer timing luck.

Okay, summer 1984 with weeks of radio and paper ads having blitzed Vegas for Judas Priest arrival. That year the JP band was the globe's #1 premiere Heavy Metal act, above all others. Many in 2026 have no idea Judas Priest had achieved such massive heights above Ozzy and everybody.

Quickly downward afterward...but that's again another tale.

And guess what? Formerly mentioned Parker had scooped a couple excellent JP tickets. Kind of a miracle, especially with the tix being on the Thomas & Mack ground floor, with easy access to the front of the stage— if we could fool some guards, right?

Two 19 year-old females would accompany, neither I really knew. Hey, no problemo. Parker knew many fascinating peeps, for sure.

Now I'd never seen Priest before, and my love for Rob Halford and all JP albums at the time was historically mega. Each of JP's albums changed and grew in styles and execution with every new release, starting September 1974. Fantastic lyrics, for sure. Way above virtually any successful musical acts of '84. Stratosphere.

Coincidentally, I lived in a cheesy baked apartment right near the Mack at the time, off big ol' Flamingo Road. Was there I got ready for the JP eve. Parker was in a two-bedroom room a couple sections away, so we'd leave together.

First, my hair. It was quite short then, sorta half-inch (1.27cm). Easy to freshen. Next, black Nike gym shoes from the time. No Hale-Bopp, of course (terrible joke, I know).

The grand odd main clothing was an early 80s "parachute pants" outfit, full body. It was called SR-71 flight suit. One item, full arms and legs— just like a flight suit.

If interested, that SR-71 vintage thing is visible online, via Wikipedia, under "Parachute Pants". Let me re-phrase: the SR-71 suit pictured on Wiki is a full shot of the single item I wore to the JP show. Yes, the one you'll see (if you investigate) was actually *mine* in summer 1984.

How it wound-up as an official Wikipedia pic is partly unknown.

Anyway, the *pièce de resistance* for the night's fashion was a new Japanese black leather biker jacket name of *Kadoya*. In the 80s it was quite a thing, beautifully designed and tough-lookin'. How I got it is yet *another* story, for another day. But it certainly sat pretty shiny cool killer on top of that SR-71 thing and the black Nike feet.

Let's not forget the double-wrapping of Heavy Metal spikes across the SR-71 pants, right below the gut. Barely visible lest the jacket was lifted. And it never was.

So I later met Parker outside, with his two attractive Hispanic females dressed very Heavy Metal and sorta gothic, perfectly bathed in spikes, belts, mini-skirts, reflective boots, super-styled hair like Jane Wiedlin cuts in facets, and totally solid blonde. Wow.

However, for some reason I had no interest in either. They were cool, and we all got along great...but for me the #1 priority then was *Rob Halford*. And of course the rest of JP...but Rob's extremely well-known presence was top of the list, on my side. His vision and work had been crazy inspirational and a valid artistic influence ever since that autumn '82 Northtown trailer park thing.

So off we went.

The Thomas and Mack place, outside UNLV as mentioned, was sold out. Wow. A 19,000-ish crowd spread like forests and mountains. Dressed styles were so very Heavy Metal, some extreme. Echoing noise of voices was wild— even when outside, waiting to get in! Felt like a calculated assembly of sorts, certain people joining together to be as one. Far out.

We got inside; it was staggering. Entire stage was metal-sculpted to The Metallian's den, wild mythological creature that dominated "*Defenders of the Faith*" album art. Damn. Intriguing.

And the place was so so full, storms of Heavy Metal leather, studs, pins, hats, the works. Many were dressed similar to Rob Halford's stage presence, and a lot looked like K.K. Downing in blazing red. Very very cool.

We were almost late, though, and made our way to the rear “floor area” section. Clearly we’d missed the Great White band opening. Ah, well.

Uh oh. These tickets had us on the floor, yes, but locked us far from the stage. Damn. I spied all over. We sat in our seats for a bit, talking and laughing and of course consuming stuff. You know, beer and cannabis.

Remember— it was 1984 and cannabis was a trip to the felony prison, post-haste. Right?

Anyway, it was incredibly loud in the place, like a football thing or something...and the show hadn’t even begun. Most in there were smokin’ ganja with zero fear, and there was some sort of music playing in the background, can’t remember who (Scorpions?), but not an ear breaker.

I wasn’t at all happy about being stuck in the back seats. True, a decent spot...but I wanted us right before the stage, which in *this* show had a high spot above the crowd of maybe a mere 6.5’ (1.9m). Not something one normally sees at any show at all. But I was quite glad, no doubt.

I told all three we better get up to the stage now, before guards keep us from moving at all. Parker said, “Just wait a minute first.” I smiled. “Man, they’ll lock the path.”

Parker looked around. It was still so incredibly loud in there. His eyes narrowed as he stared front to back. Then he nodded. And pointed toward the stage.

So away we went. FYI, I was 6’ tall and Parker was just over 6’1”.

We shuffled through the crowd to the entry point that took audience people right down to the stage. Highly busy. Damn. Closer we four got and it seemed like instant success— except for the guard, a big Italian guy with goatee and long sideburns. He questioned everyone who walked up, of course while asking for tickets he physically scanned.

No way we’re gonna do this, I thought. No way. Within seconds we’ll get stopped, examined, turned away. And here it goes...

The two females were in front of us by design, and people were pushing all over. It was kinda like being in a sardine can, as some say, no distance between audience bodies.

The guard stared at us and simultaneously pushed a couple other people back. Our two dialed females smiled and said, “Hi, guard!!” very loud...and the guard grabbed their first ticket.

Of course I knew when he saw, *el finito*. So I kinda prepped to walk back.

Suddenly there was yelling next to and behind us. Yeah, a big ol’ fight between not only two white dudes in Metal attire, but two females in blue vinyl and leather, pulling hair and swinging. It was almost funny. But not really.

The guard handed our first female’s ticket back to her without even checking, and he charged to the fight scene. We all looked at each other for about a second, smiled and moved fast as we could...without attracting attention.

And down we went to the stage. Left side. Goddamn, was I surprised. We were 100% lucky, and that’s all.

And unexpectedly, the show started! That quick. Down to the left we went, but almost immediately Parker and the females moved center stage. So I was there, alone, at the very end of the left. And I could see the whole Metallian stage clearly, just at a serious angle. No problemo.

Concert started with “*Love Bites*” of all things. On came Rob, Glenn, K.K., Ian, and Holland. I was overwhelmed by the sight, but from the very start I didn’t move at all.

Yes, I stood there in the SR-71 parachute suit, covered with that fabulous *Kadoya* shiny black leather jacket...and nearly bald...and with arms stoically folded like a guy in a library or something. Didn’t move at all.

The crowds near and around were berserk, almost punk in over-stated expression and dancin’ and swinging. Didn’t bother me in the least, the insane jumping yelling head-twirling crowd. Again, I stood almost 100% non-moving, arms folded. Staring at the JP band with an almost non-existent smile. Minor upward move on each end of lips. Hah!

It was stellar to observe the band finally live, and this crazy close. The dress, sweating, incredible physical stuff. All JP guys were athletic, of course. But Rob Halford was a step beyond.

Rob's physicality was virtually gymnast in a street sense, constant moves and controls driven by pure massive emotion and candor. Arms, legs, neck, head...sorta like a royal machine designed by Da Vinci and Michelangelo. Maybe Jim Cameron.

After JP was about a half hour on stage, I started getting notice. From *them*. It was almost indistinguishable, but my personal non-movement—with arms folded and quite a costume—was no question getting occasional looks from Glenn Tipton and K.K. They saw and did nothing, but with my being literally the only person in that front crowd standing totally still and almost zombie-staring with zero looks on the face...getting assessment, I reckon.

Wait. Rob Halford. Indeed, he started looking a bit more my way. No question I figured it was just normal stage stuff. Nothing to think about, at all.

But he kept doing it. More. Hey, man, I spent five years doing stage myself (another tale) so no, it was just Rob “playing to” an unknown person in the audience...whether I was the only one in the house 100% immobile and staring and arms folded...or not.

So I forgot about it.

But then...

Yes, here we go. Glenn Tipton, who I always totally dug, came in a revealing way near that left side I was on (*stage right*, of course) thrashin' his killer Stratocaster shredder. And all I did was stare at him. Arms folded. Face blank.

As before.

But get this: in the middle of Tipton doing his thing, he looked *right* at me, into the eyes...and with his body motion smiled in a confused way, he asked silent with his arms, “Mate! The hell you doin'?!” His eyes opened full-wide during that, and his head shook. Seeing as he was a few hands away, his attention was 100% real.

That was cool as fuque, I tell you. I'd been a huge digger of Tipton a long time. So I smiled and simply gave the wondrous chap a solid thumb, from my right hand extended a bit.

Believe it or not, Glenn Tipton smiled strong and nodded his head at me over and over...and then turned and went away.

Damn, that was cool. Couldn't wait to tell somebody later, over sashimi maybe. But I went right back to my 100% arm-folded still. Or close.

Now the stirring Priest song "*Rock Hard, Ride Free*" occurred, a tune I first listened to via an '83 Panasonic "Walkman Style" cassette, RQ-JA61, the day the "*Defenders of the Faith*" album was released...while crossing the giant vacant desert earlier this year, between my Northtown house and a smaller casino called The Silver Nugget.

Incredible words and thoughts, that song. In a way quite different from a lot of Priest stuff. Not better, of course. Just deeper. Denser.

As the song went to instrumental segment, Rob did his thing...eyes utterly closed about center stage, lost in the sounds and vibes and meanings of that particular piece. It was...exhilarating. No doubt those lyrics were very substantial in his world. He looked almost like a person lost in quiet ecstasy, with rolls of his body and of course vast amounts of his sweat dripping all over.

For sure I'd noticed his substantial sweat before, as anyone has who's ever watched him perform. Rob typically sweats heavy, largely from his fantastic physical efforts and involvement. Let's be aware that a person could not achieve the looks and moves Rob did, were they not universally committed to every word, every glorious feeling of artistic attachment.

So then the secondary part of "*Rock Hard, Ride Free*" started. Much more powerfully delivered, for sure.

And then Rob Halford walked straight to me.

At first I felt he moved to that stage corner just to do so. But he knelt down eyes mostly closed and severely sung lyrics...screaming...wild expression, eyes closed. Incredible.

Then he physically altered his position so he was standing on his knees *directly* over my head...and he leaned downward...right to my face, close as he could get.

Then his sweat came. And I noticed in the corner of my right eye that people were watching. So yeah, I was wrong: he *was* doing this for me. For some reason. And he wasn't leaving. Not at all.

And sweat? My God he was dripping like a steamy warm mini-faucet. His salty human water flooded hard on my head, hair, face, cheeks, mouth, jacket. Not kidding in the least. Went on for a minimum of a minute and a half, large amount of time for singular things on a movie, vid, or stage.

My face, head, jacket became wetter and wetter. Remember it was Vegas summer, and even with ACs going the Thomas and Mack was fire hot inside. I myself was of course perspiring like hell under the arms, with that *Kadoya* on. But I refused to move. Or wipe Rob away, except once very quick in the eyes.

I totally let him rain all over. Over and over.

Why not?

Just as the "*Rock Hard, Ride Free*" song was nearing finality, one of the attractive females Parker brought along came over and put her hands on my right side and arm. Had no idea what was up. She whispered in my ear, "Is Rob a friend of yours?" I didn't look.

But Rob saw. And when he spotted her touching me, he immediately stood and walked away, back to center stage with final words of the tune.

I turned to the female and said, "Maybe he thought I was somebody else." She smiled and walked...and then something imploded in my neural net, for all time.

That whole interaction with Rob Halford was a major life event. I know for many it'll sound odd, but I experienced the complete end of the 4th Wall.

As you may or may not know, 4th Wall is the invisible *Homo sapiens* barrier between performers on stage or whatever, and anyone in an audience. It's a presentation thing in part, kind of a one-way mirror maybe, but in a larger sense it's about life separation of an actor or singer, etc., from a regular person. "Regular" being non-celebrity, non-actor, non-artist. Someone just basically "normal" or considered "average" and what have you.

Be aware the 4th Wall also includes automatic psychological and fully invisible separations of “average” people from those of note, wealth, prestige, or even simple awareness. Like there’s a blockage or genuine barrier between people that is not crossed. A gossy veil, even.

Two people on different planets with no ability to travel in tandem.

And somehow for me, on 24 July 1984—under Rob Halford as he sweat, yelled, and acknowledged—the 4th Wall I’d lived with since birth was gone.

Forever.

The “*Defenders of the Faith*” show went on and I felt different right away. Now seeing Rob, Glenn, K.K., Ian, and Holland became 100% scene reversal. Over time I’ve used a simple explanation: for me since the 4th Wall fell, dealing with any human being, regardless of their manufactured positions or passages—it’s just like finding random people at a bus stop. All the same, all different, mere chunks of meat. Varied and excellent at times, but merely flesh.

Well, then.

“*Defenders of the Faith*” ended and we all left. I got a lot of anger from Parker. He could tell something changed with me, dramatically. He didn’t know what or why...but he and I were damned close back then. He could sense I moved another direction. And he didn’t even see the Rob Halford sweat shower event! He heard about it from the curious female.

When I got back to my tiny ghetto apartment that night, I stood in front of the Rob Halford poster on my bedroom wall, which I believe came from JP at US Fest ’83. It was magnifique. Lots of daylight and steel beams. Rob screaming and pointing forward. Leather as hell. Amazing.

Gently, slowly, I took the poster down. Slight pulls to remove it. Later days I gave it to an old pal, also 18, who loved it. And he wondered why I was giving it away, since most people I knew at the time were perfectly aware of my Halford inspiration thing.

It was not at all a *rejection* of Rob, what I did. It simply seemed...unnatural to have a stage/performance picture on the wall, of anyone.

Five months later I luckily wound up professionally on a Vegas-based movie, with quite a few stars. Mariska Hargitay (later on Law & Order), Richard Roundtree, Christopher Lee (later “Sir”), plus many others. For that movie I was often on screen in many Vegas locations with most of the actors, as extra. Had a higher “featured” silent position (somewhat) because I randomly assisted the LA casting director to hire locals, easily.

Even today I’m distinctly on the background Vegas hotel restaurant stage with Chris Lee, which was shot about 3:05 AM. Among other stuff.

Lee was such a cool dude. Liked him for sure. Warm and wonderful bloke...at a bus stop.

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Note: One thing that nailed me in the JP “*Defenders of the Faith*” show was the fact that the titan JP song “*Screaming for Vengeance*” had not been done. Kept waiting for it; no deal.

Even now in 2026 it occurs to me that such a significant piece, a symbolic and literal title of their former album, had been avoided. And for me back then it was a kinda #1 tune in many aspects...artistic, emotional, color.

Interesting.

End.